

POEMS

OF

HAROLD BRIAN STEELE



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HAROLD BRIAN STEELE

POEMS

Of Harold Brian Steele

with Biographical

Introduction



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to the
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INTRODUCTION.

Harold Brian Steele was born at Howell, Michigan, August 6, 1887, the son of George and Dora Steele. When the boy was three months old his parents removed to Charlotte, Michigan. It was at Charlotte that Steele received his entire preparatory education. He entered the primary schools of that city at the age of six, and was considered to be an exceptionally precocious child. He began to read extensively at the age of eight.

His first poetical composition was produced when the boy was eleven years of age. It bore the pretentious title "History of Persia." The following year he wrote another poem entitled "Rulers of The World" which was published in the Charlotte Tribune. The editor offered to publish the lad's earlier poem, but Steele had already discovered historical inaccuracies, and refused to have it printed.

In 1901 he left the grammar grades for a time, serving for one term as page in the House of Representatives at Lansing where he took an active part in a debating society organized by the boys.

During his high school course Steele again absented himself, spending a half year in Denver, Colorado. Despite these interruptions he graduated with his class in 1905. He wrote the class prophecy at that time.

During his boyhood Steele read a great deal of poetry, philosophy, and history, frequently walking to Albion, a few miles from his home, where he could take advantage of the college library. It was during this period of his life that he became acquainted with the works of Swinburne and Whitman, the influence of whom can be seen in his poems.

The year before he entered the university, Steele taught a district school near his home. On the way to and from his school he passed through a swamp wherein he found the inspiration for his poems "Morning," "Noon," and "Night."

He entered the University of Michigan in the autumn of 1906, and placed himself at once at the head of his class. He was one of the founders of The Lanthorne Club, a literary organization, and was a contributor to the university magazine, The Inlander. He was elected to the Cosmopolitan Club through his ability to speak German.

Besides displaying ability in the writing of poetry, Steele showed considerable talent as a musician and caricaturist. He wrote several songs, none of which were offered for publication.

Owing to financial difficulties he left college at the close of his first year, accepting charge of the schools of Foster City, Michigan. He intended returning to Ann Arbor to pursue his studies, but on June 20, 1908, just as he was completing a successful year at that place, he was prostrated by heat, dying the same day. He was interred in Maple Hill Cemetery, Charlotte.

Many of the poems contained in this volume were written before Steele entered the university, and were considered by him, and entitled, "exercises." Frequently passages occur which, it need scarcely be said, he never would have permitted to be printed. The merit of these earlier poems seemed such, however, that they could not be omitted from this collection of his better poems, and they are printed as he wrote them, unrevised.

L. A. W.

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WELEND-SMITH ON SEASTEAD.

Note: "Once there lived in the Woldfdales three craftsmen elves, Wêland, Egil and Slagfrid, who had ravished three Valkyres, and taken them as wives. But the Valkyres became tired of home life, and went away. Egil and Slagfrid went to seek them, but Wêland stayed at his forge making jewels. Nithard, king of the Niari, captures Wêland by stealth, took his jewels, his sword, and his magic robe of swan's down, and imprisoned him on the rocky islet of Seastead, leaving him alone with only his forge to make jewels. The two little sons of Nithard came to the island, and seeing the rich jewels that Wêland had made, begged for them. Wêland said to them that if they would come early in the morning and would tell no one, he would give them all the gems and gold. They came, and Wêland held open the lid of the chest that they might look in. Wêland shut down the lid with a mighty stroke upon their heads, and severed them from their bodies. Then he made their skulls into drinking cups for the king, their eyes into jewels for the king's daughters, and their hair into rings for the queen."

Building on this legend I have attempted to picture Wêland as first made insane by the solitude and the loss of his wife and magic robe. The key to his insanity is the fleck across the moon, which constantly terrorizes him. He wishes for sanity, but when a storm hides the moon and he becomes sane, he is so stricken with remorse that he prays to become insane again.

Methinks I had a goddess once to wife—
Nay, 'twas not I, 'twas Wêland-Smith, the elf—
I? I am but the shadow of a thing,
The unclean shadow of a witless thing.
There is a bloody fleck across the moon—
There is no snow, or it were bloody too,
And ye, oh little skulls, are witless now—
But ye were always simple—I was not.

If I could only think so very long
Perchance I would not be so. 'Times I dream
Or almost dream, I'm witting, then I see
The moon with all its sanguined surface bare,
And grinning faces whistle at me, so
I cannot think, until the wind-noise comes
And shuts them out.

There are no seasons here—
Snow time may come and go, and many suns—
What color is the sun? And does it jeer
And laugh at me, as does the drunken moon?
I saw the sun this afternoon, but fear
I cannot tell. Perhaps 'twas purple hued—'twould
be
I wot, a pretty thing.

I clash my sledge
And forge out little rings. The saffron flames
Make gold more golden, till it runs and blows
And runs again. How do I get the gold?
I used to know, when I was Weland-Smith—
Some touch of down-made magic I suppose,
That has stayed by me. What is this I say?
What is this swan's down? What is magic?
Oh if I could only hide the moon!
Dress it in swan's down, forge it into rings,
Or make that grinning mouth into a belt
To fit the queen—oh Thor, the moon!

I wonder if
They have the seasons more out in the world.
I wonder if the dawn comes in the spring
With little spitting clouds; I wonder if
There be a place yet, where the moon is white,
And if it shines on cranes' nests in the reeds,
All touched with silver from the hoar-frost's forge.
I ponder sometimes if there be a world
Beyond this little filthy isle. There must

Be one beyond the sea, else whence came you,
You little whitened skulls? And whence came he
Who sent you here? I almost seem to know
He sent me here. That's why you ne'er returned—
How was it now? I know it all! Oh must
I see that leering, banal face again
And watch it dye the ripple-tops with red
Along the ocean water!

Little skull.

Just fit to nestle in my hollowed hand
Methinks the pale wine will taste double sweet,
The pallid wine that comes from in the hills—
Hills? I seem to know what hills may be.
I'd tell you, little skull, were not the moon
Gibbering its mockery at me—but then
It matters not. Yellow bubbly wine
Will tang with sweet, sharp blood when drinks the
king—
All unawitting whose the skull may be.
I know the moon face will not whistle then
And say that Weland is gone mad.

Poor little skull! My raving frightened you.
You were not frightened on that other day,
When Weland's craft was with him for a while.
You don't remember? You were then alive—
See you this strand of yellow stuff? It was
Your hair. And this big parchment smeared
With red was then your skin. I swear you were
A pretty lad. And you, white, smaller skull,
This longer rope of hempen color once
Was yours. Why don't you answer me to say
That you remember when it was? I think
There was a bloody fleck across the moon
That night—I cannot tell me if the gulls
Came out and flapped their wings, and flew away;
But you can hear the crimson moon-face howl
And whistle at me.

See these limpid stones
That send the maddened moon-light back again
In rosy rubied flashes. They were once
Your eyes. I say they were, but they were dim
Like any mortal's eyes; and ye were not
Witting enough to flash out fire therefrom—
Now they are as the eyes of Godling's sons
And will adorn your sister's lustful breasts.
No mighty king nor orgulous baron holds
The skill to fashion such as Weland does:
I, broken master-craftsmen of the world.
Yet neither puny king nor puerile lord,
Regal in simpering pomp or troubled rule,
Is frightened by a blood fleck on the moon.

Oh welcome screaming of yon frightened gulls—
I cannot hear the whistling of the moon
When they rush howling to their nestle-place
Before a little, thunder-bellied rain,
A little snarlful rain, that comes and goes,
And puts out Weland's ill-smelled furnace fire.
Ah! blessed be Odin for the storm. I know
I have my wits. The snaky, streaked clouds
Shut out the baleful face; you foolish gulls
Outscream the wry-faced demon in the sky.
I fear no more for I am Weland-Smith.
How sweet this taste of living is to me.
I swell my lungs with the fresh foam-blown air.
The rain beats in my face and hair and eyes
And I am glad. I chant unto my God—
Yet I was frightened by the little moon!
But here I stand, my robe of swan-skin gone—
Gone is my sword wherein my glory lay.
I am a prisoner on this death-rid isle;
Your father put me here, you polished skull.
I see no thing that lives beside me more.
I nevermore will hunt the swan's nest, hid
Among the reeds, nor will I ever chase
The coarse-haired stag down to the muddy stream.

I will not see the Valkyr bride I took
Nor smell the ripples of her scented hair
Nor kiss its texture. Never will I hear
The crooning song she learned in Paradise.
And you, sweet little things, you cannot see
The dawn-sky, with its jewel-painted bands,
The moistened, rooted pathways of the woods
That smell so soft when first the storm is done.
Your father set me on this fear-fraught isle,
Took 'way my blade and swans-robe, clothed me
thus

In reeking, uncleaned sheepskin, taunted me,
And left me thus to rot away my brain
In solitude. My vengeance fell on you,
Poor, greedy, innocent, light-hearted boys.
Oh! would I knew it not. I would I were
The god-crazed creature of a moment past
That trembled at the moon. I would I were
A mortal and could end my life. I would
That I could climb up on the cliff, where far
The thunder-blasted oak throws out its arms,
And toss myself exulting in the sea.
Oh! would yon green-touched waves could mount
again,
Up past the streaked barriers of the cliff,
And drown this lightless isle and Weland-Smith—
But I am elfin and am doomed to live
Eternally.

Ah Thor! What do I see?
The whitened top of every wave turns red.
The gulls are still and everything turns red.
Methinks there is a fleck across the moon.
I see a broken cloud. It's lined with red,
And shadow-faces shine along its top
And shout wild things. Ah! little skull
I see the moon-face back! We are afraid.
It whistles at me once again, and jeers
The storm that's gone. I cannot seem to think—
There is a bloody fleck across the moon.

MARSHLAND.

Morning.

I love the morning when the half-waked sky
Afrighted at the sun's first majesty
Turns ashen gray. The marsh winds blow
Above the silent bank of fog that hangs
Breast high across the swamp. The scattered elms
Have lost their day's dim coat of dust, and stand
Green lighted beacons on a mist built sea.
I love the fields when night moths hang at rest,
And oat-tops sway with tropic-winged flowers
That men call butterflies.

Noon.

My heart is full of music in this place
And dreams, wherein the sunlight is a part;
The golden shadows of the dim green lands
And lichen covered trunks of ancient trees.
And nothing sounds, and all is in my dreams;
The long blue snake, lithe-coiling, beautiful;
The long blue row of blossoms, fed on mist;
The shining blackness of the waterways,
Still as their yellow-blooded lily-heads
That wake nor move; and rest is in my dreams.

Night.

A thread of cloud-stuff streaks the moon, and dulls
The light that tips the ripples of the stream
Whose dim lit current holds elusive hues,
Like phosphorescent glow of rotting stumps.
A little mist, half-purpled in its depth,
Curls from the flowerless reaches of the swamp
And in the lifeless sheen of muffled light
Floats to the hills in strange weird shapes, and bathes
Their tops like dour fantastic twisted wraiths
Of sunset clouds.

MOODS.

There came three gray robed women to my bed,
And softly they sang to me as I slept;
And sang they of the lakes.
One told me of a yellow-lighted pool,
Where flags and rushes drooped their scented heads,
And ever slept; where on the matted beds
Were lying lily leaves; and sweet and cool
Her breath was as she sang.
Another whispered of a little sea
Whose waters rested not, but as if pressed
From hidden sources, by a spirit dressed
In blackness, struggled upward to be free;
And this one's breath was warm with life.
One told me of a hot and steaming spring
Whose waters reeked with sulphur, and that cried
In torment as it left the rocks, and tried
To cool itself; and when she ceased to sing
I felt the scorching unrest in her breath.
There sang to me three women as I slept;
And yet the women and the songs were one;
And sang they of the lakes.

SUNSET.

The sun is slowly sinking once again
In burnished iridescence, spreading wide,
Of colors gorgeous as with Heaven's light
Coming, rising, like the sweeping tide.
Enthroned in azure glory—mighty state,
With royal purple canopy above
Slowly comes the twilight over all,
And with it come the thoughts of living love.
Heart's passions rise before the weakening mind,
And steal their hues from end of earth, foretold,
And as the twilight steals upon the wind
Changes our brazen thoughts to burnished gold.

RONDEAU.

To R. A.

I cannot read the song that lies
Deep hidden in your autumn eyes,
Those mystic, orient haunted dreams
That light them up. At dusk it seems
That I have read them in the skies
Ages ago. The unborn sighs
Your parted lips breathe not, your eyes
Declare to me. The deeper gleams
I cannot read.

I cannot read the prayer that flies
With travail burdened, spirit-wise.
Nor follow I the silent streams
Whose waves are tipped with faint light's beams;
The message buried in them lies
I cannot read.

DEAD WATERS.

In the red-banked dust of the twilit road,
That looks where the lees of the dead waters are,
Stood a hooded woman in crimson cowl;
Above her head hung a crimson star.
In her hand she bore a brazen goad;
Above its point hung a brazen star.
At her feet, lay a creature of shape more foul
Than the crawling beasts of the dead waters are.

Down the dust-cast cloud of the road, she went,
As an undulous wave of a level sea,
Then she turned in her path; with her goad on high
Uplifted to signal, beckoned me.
I followed in worship till light was spent,
The dusty-red twilight deserted me,
But her twin-stars flashed and grew bright, and I
Groped in their flame to the dead-watered sea.

The monstrous thing at her feet shone out
In the ruddy light, and the light from the brass.
I felt she was lovely in every mede,—
Save the lecherous thing in the dark-watered grass.
The lifeless waters lapped all about
At the roots of that savorless, odorless grass;
I plucked a stalk that was bent with seed,—
And hueless it was, in the light from the brass.

She waited for me where the grass was high,
All dim shone her face in the star's warm red.
She motioned away, where a lily-choked moat
Held back the waves of the sea that was dead.
A luminant moon-cloud made light the sky
Past the hills, round the place where the sea was dead;
Then the crouching thing leaped at the scarlet-robed
throat,
And aquiver she lay, in her star's dim red.

Her face was so fair, in the star's warm light,
And I mourned that a beast could such horror bring.
The blood-watered fangs crushed her glow-bathed
breast!

I seized her goad, and slew the thing.
I rejoiced with loud words in the dying light,
Exulted aloud that I slew the thing;
For the moat was opened, the waters at rest,
I had wrought the mercy she bade me bring.

I rejoiced that I loved, and in losing my love
Had followed the task it set for me.
Her star was grown white, a ruby empearled,
And shone on the lees of the lifeless sea.
The opened moat led the dead waters above
To a changing, living, pulsating sea.
And like wind-wearied wings in a zephyrless world,
The sorrowing peace of dead love came to me.

SWINBURNE.

Thou painted ray that rests upon the stone
Floor of an ancient sepulchre, fall'n through
A single leaf of stained glass, whose warm rue
Betrays its antique glory! Stern, alone
Among less gorgeous lights that line the tomb,
And strive to be thine equal, standest thou,
Lone singer of forgotten music! Now
One last life-spark in Albion's barren womb.

Thou knowest the uttering in the breast of maid
That, lorn, cries unto Hell for the release
Of forfeit soul, or, wailing, seeks an own
Farewell in Lethe. Songs that, fashioned, fade
Unfallen from the lips of Godheads, cease
But to become thrice gloried from thine own.

NIGHT.

I catch the delight of the spirit of night
I bathe in the waves of the wind.
Though the cloud-threads of white banish stars in
 afright
The moon her true glory may find;
For she glazes with blue the heaven's dim hue
Drawing lake-cradled winds from the west;
She sucks the clear dew,—'tis a rare-scented brew
For't has lain in a rose-bud's warm breast.

JOY OF THE MORNING.

When the joy of the morning comes into my heart
And the sun in the east-land awakes,
My thoughts find their way from the commonplace paths
To my land of the shimmering lakes.
Not a land of dull mortals is this field of mine
Where the murmuring winds softly swell—
It is blessed with the musk of the heaven-blown rose
And the scent of the asphodel.

Scents of the spices of gleaming Cathay
Waft on the winds from the west;
Flashes of perfume from fir and from pine
Come with the birds from the west
Winged with the winds from the old frozen sea;
Ocean salt blows from the east.
Heart of my wanderings, this is my home—
Mine! Ah, but mine the least.

My thoughts float away in a golden-dipped dream
And sink in some black shadowed sea,
My heart loves the low, listless cadence that comes
From the deep, shelving lake-shore, to me.
I live in this world when I live in my mind,
And when that lives, its living is all,
But alas, I come back to the dull garden paths;
I am hedged by a high earthly wall.

FORGOTTEN GODS.

Where the light of the lonely moon is lost
In the limitless reach of the night cast sea,
I lay alone on the blackened cliff,
And watched the wave-lights come in, to me.
I lay alone on the blackened cliff
And watched the wave-tops reach for me.
Then I looked to the place where the light is lost
In the shadowy line when the sky meets the sea.

And out of the place where the sky meets the sea
There floated a boat toward the blackened cliff,
A shadowy boat, like a thing from the lost.
The shade of a rower sat in the skiff.
A shadowy boat, like a breath from the lost;
A hooded shade bent itself in the skiff;
A line of shadows above the sea
Followed the boat to the blackened cliff.

They drifted in silence before the cliff,
Like menshapes they were, with eyes of the lost
And I saw in the wave-lights that came from the sea
That their garments were as with hell winds tossed
And I knew what the shapes were, I saw in the sea
With eyelids in anguish, with robes tempest tossed.
Forgotten Gods were they, passing the cliff
Embittered idols whose nations were lost.

TO A DEAD PINE.

Bent wraith of thing departed, standest thou
Gray vigil-keeper of an anguished race!
Hued but as fog is in the long, hilled place
Where naught but fog and thou abid'st. Art now,
As comes the starlit wind, await for those
Enwrapping ones that fell away from thee?
Rejoice not in their going? Thou art free
From cumber and despited things too close.

Where joys a lonely freedom when the moon
Sees naught but the eternal, thou seest naught
But mists and long, cold hills and moon in round
Or crescent? Naught but white-wind time and June
Can come to thee, and all thy days are fraught
With chill, old visions of dun, bark-strewn ground.

A SONG OF OCTOBER.

Golden and glowing and glowing and golden,
Hills and sky and hills.

Warm wind blowing, and blowing encolden,
Chills and warms and chills.

Brown are the woods at the base of the hills,
Brown are the fields where the oat-straws were,
Gold are the leaves where the sunset wills
That winds shall stir.

Misting and clouding and clouding and misting,
Sky and hills and sky.

Bare hills shrouding, and shrouding and listing,
Wells the vale-fog by.

Bent pines sleep on the hills and sigh,
Stooped flags break by the cold-stream's edge,
Ragged flags where the stream drops by—
Blown flags and sedge.

Stricken, reviving, reviving and stricken,
Hills and sky and hills,

White clouds riving, riving and thicken—
Air swells clear and fills.

Faint grow the trees where the rain wind wills,
Dim are the hills where the trees are asleep,
Wet are the flags as the stream-bed fills.
Fills and grows deep.

Glowing and golden and golden and glowing,
Sky and hills and sky.

'Sun un beholden—beholden and going,
Clouds are whirling high.

Bare logs glow where the light shows nigh,
And wet, sleek trunks, half winter-brown
Gleam for a moment, and then hang dry.
Then light goes down.

THE LAKE.

I know a little hidden, murky lake
Shut in by trees, and green touched pastured hills,
Save on the west where under somber reeds
The marshy bordered streamlet leads away
Its waters. Withered stems are all that stand
Of the once living greenness of the plants,
And where the blue-leaved lilies lately were
Are only nodding flags.

REMORSE.

My soul was lost in a dreaming
In a land of departed tears.
As the ghosts so white sent a purple light
Through a vista of long-lost years,
I stood a king among spirits,
I ruled in a realm that was dead;
My crown was night, my scepter fright,
My coffers were burdened with lead.

And out of the mists of the morning,
From the cold glassy sea came a cry:
"Thou monarch of fears, thou master of tears,
Wilt thou never allow us to die?"
I trembled and turned in my trembling
And writ up above my dim head—
"Till the end of the years, the lakes and the meres,
Remorse can never be dead."

A SUMMER OF LABOR WITH THE HANDS.

Sweet is the burden of thy moment, shrinking;
Soft the breath of field dust, dew-forsaken;
Strong is the grip of hot, wet wind, rain-shriven;
Day and day of toil.
Earth creeps to sunset; morn to morn time sinking;
Drouth to rain; sere corn by storm wind shaken;
Light comes to lightning; white fleshed oaks, new riven.
Black the ooze-sod soil.
Song without passion, lisped in fruitless branches;
Chants, as myriad sighing women, token
Quivering wings and scarlet beaks, here darting
Nests in blossomed trees.
Dim odorous the ruddy gum that stanches
Flow where tender, growing bark is broken.
Sweet are the blossoms, where the bee, departing,
Comes with many bees.
Riping tall grain-stalks, twisted close, and unburnished;
Smirching dust of threshing-floors, and changing
Tints of dark, nuded fields; and all joys of sensing,
All of strength are thine.
All sating of all senses full is furnished;
Hues of skies, and flying birds, and ranging
Yellow turned leaves, with red and gold commencing.
Sound and sense and sign.
Love without thought and full life long, save thinking:
Blue veined neck, hair bound o'er-close, yet shaken
By little winds; moist kisses taste unbidden.
Flower caresses flower.
Pale, naked ghost of thought, forsaken, drinking
Water from one pale, crushed poppy taken,
Sleeps but a little, yet from living hidden
One departing hour.

A KELTIC DREAM.

A rush of purple waters bathed my soul,
A wind of many perfumed sighs swept past,
A mist of white with crimson lights behind
Engulfed all else. Nor was there of the whole
Familiar universe a single last
Remembrance—nor of body nor of mind.

Then with a sound like vague and troubled breath
A star shot up from out the purple sea
Beside me, like a comet from below.
Changeless, pallid as a light from death
With plenilunar fire it shone to me
And I was stricken by its mortal glow.

THE STORM.

The glory of the morning brings its rose
All solitary, 'tis the last that summer bears
Fair blown with laughter
Now o'er cast—and now
All mist-free blue the sky. Unheralded
The tiny showers appear. First gloomy mist
Hangs round the spot where earth and sky are wed;
Then distant throb of green rough forest tops
Where the first storm wind stirs their virgin bed
And then the wind itself: At first it comes
In zephyrs like new lovers' sweet caress,
Then stronger, fiercer with majestic sweep
Like progress of a king. In solemn dress
The whole earth must be clad. The grass bows down
And worships groveling its almighty lord
The king. Now steals a drop significant,
A harbinger of glory. In accord
The voices of the earth are silent—hushed
The master sings. A single note swells out
Vibrant, trembling with a hallowed power
Not like the wind, the storm king's hellish rout
Of spirits damned in Tartarus; but low
And sweet like songs from blessed fields,—
The note breaks. Now a chord and now a song
Burst out like spearheads playing on the shields
Of lusty, fairhaired men. But that's soon gone,
And gentler, ever gentler comes the song,
A coronach of youth. Then slowly sweeps
A chastened spirit through the rain-drop's throng,
And over the earth's myriad lowly heads,
Bowed down in sweet submission, comes a call,
Resonant and pure—a marriage bell
The storm is done—Life's not begun at all.

PURGED.

I came to the place where she told me ghosts come,
To the snow-white fane at the top of the hill,
To the moonlit fane that lies on the hill
Where she told me in truth that the sad ghosts come.

The hill lay white by a little moon,
A hard moon unhazed by cloud or aught
That wisps the sky. A grass-held dune
She told me it was—and the fane I sought
 Was a holy place
 Where a tear-eyed race
Of ghosts outcast dim wonders wrought.

I hated the face of her that sent
Me to lie in the place where the dour things are.
I loved her fit self, but the love was spent
In its loving—I hated her face with its scar.
 I loathed her marred face
 As I knelt in the place,
As I knelt at the ghost-altar, under the star.

The altar lay glowing under a star
That burned strange fire to light the things,
Things unrobed, not nude that silently far
Held line and circle, dim shadowless rings
 Round the altar-place.
 Each dread-eyed face
Held a scar that glowed like spit fire that stings.

I came from the place where the sad ghosts come
From the ruined fane where old arches are.
I saw her face where the arches are—
The scar was gone and I welcomed her come.

I DREAMED OF YOU.

I dreamed of you when skies were gold,
The mist-crowned sun in purple rolled;
I saw you fair, when clad in snow
The keen west lake-wind, driving low,
Streaked the white earth with drift and fold.
You came again when joy grew old,
When love was wasted, fires grown cold;
With ghosts of dead ideals arow—

I dreamed of you.

Your eyes the golden glories hold
Like morning moon on frost-kissed wold.
Whene'er I dream of you I know
Their pearl-lights set your face aglow.
A God-like vision yet retold—

I dreamed of you.

DESPOILED.

Where the wood and the meadow and highland advancing

Meet together in open land,
And jutting away to the red shore, glancing,—
Defile and hill slope on either hand—

Is a low-lain place where the wind swept once,
Where the wind swept the dead leaves, chance live leaves
then,

In a low-lain heap—where it swept but once,
And sweeps not again.

There the wood and the meadow and highland are guarding,
ing,

Guarding the leaf bed from further change
From the wind and sky, and the red shore retarding
Hems the seethed waves that topple and range.

Red shore line holds back the waves from the scraw.—

'Tis naught that I know of your song of love!

Here only the wail and the foam from the scraw

Is blown from above.

'Tis naught that I knew of the thing called loving—

Winter and summer and leaves I knew;

Leaves and dead flowers and the red stones shoving

Softly against spent waves that were blue.

Nothing I knew of the thing you sang,—

I knew that the winds came not to the place.

Your pale mouth spake the same song you sang,

And I deemed it grace.

Now I know that you chanted, all dourful singing—

Wood and highland and meadow there meet—

I knew naught of love, but its sweet-sung ringing

Cried its own name, and again rang sweet.

I know naught of love, and I love not, noworthy;

Brown winds blow now where the heaped leaves lay.

Man loves, loses aught thereby, and noworthy,

sits grieving, men say.

INVOCATION TO LOVE.

Thou angel-goddess, guardian of the night,
Look down upon us with your endless hope;
Shed benisons on those who love your light
Fair Venus! When you doff your cloudy cope,
And show your face eternal, ever fair,
All nature brings response. The heartless snow
That gives no thought to lovers, leaves its lair
Where it has guarded all the things that grow;
Where you can smile, entrenched with icy wall,
And slowly join some noisy babbling stream
That breaks on loosened stones with rushing fall,
Or in the evening casts thy loving gleam
Back on its way to heaven, a thousand times
Reflected from each wave. Your blessing rest
With mellow gentleness like distant chimes
Upon our hearts before you kiss your west.
Come, oh ye lovers, loved by Venus, Hail!
Hail! to the goddess-star who binds your hearts
For who is not a lover? Barriers frail
Become when they're but pierced by Cupid's darts,
And Cupid is but Venus' son. Ye maids—
Whose liquid eyes dark hidden fires conceal
Come! Give your adoration,—love ne'er fades
If only it is bound to heaven's wheel.

Love is as fair as the morning light
When the mists are blown away,
And the southwind warm, with a mellow might
Casts its blessing on the day.

Love is strongest when the twilight falls
And the hearts beat faster when the sky turns gray,
And eyes, when Phoebus slowly hides his face
Look love unbidden, for then comes Love's day.
And stillness steps so softly as it comes
That lover's longing welcomes it unheard,
And so we sit in twilight, and our thoughts
Repay in love's own language love's one word.

ERNA'S AWAY.

The sundered stars fall dimly to my sight,
The squat hills with their silvered stubble are
But gloomy figments in a red moon's light,
I see them not with vision. Hanging far
Is naught but this pale pasture of dead leaves:
This sweet, keen meadow where is naught to reap
Save what is garnered in the keen, sweet sheaves
Of wet twigs, by a wind half-taught to sleep.

The ruddy, southern star where clouds go past,
Glowes like some spitting furnace fire, grown faint
With hidden, ash-enscalding heat; on which is cast
From time to time quick-flaming liquor. Seems a
taint
Of charlatanric gloom hangs in the sky
Where should be scud-flecked, hueless blaze. The light
Makes clouds hang yellow—yellow and too nigh
For such a few, and such a ruddy night.

ERNA'S COMING.

Out of the sky where the red moon comes,
Over the hills where the birch hears the rain;
Close from the woods where the wet leaves crush
Under my foot, to ooze smooth again;
Moaned from wet, echoless floors of the mine—
Deserted place where black, winged things
Vie with green fungus and grime-born vine;
Even the cold cloud, hurrying, sings
Ernastine.

Strays of red vines that bear red fruit;
Ruddy, bright berries that sting to the taste;
Paths in the wood, set with pool and with root;
Hills that are harvested, scarp that is waste;
Sunset and coming sun, red day and fallow;
Day dream and sleeping and sounds that awake;
Furrows in living lands, weeds in the fallow;
Uttered or utterless, thy burthen take:
Ernastine.

SONNET.

Full of passion were the crimson lips,
A mocking passion yet with love for me,
For I had poured my heart's tale out; yet she
Turned and blew a kiss from her finger tips,
Gaily tripped her way to the carriage door
And left me wondering within the hall,
A flash from melting eyes and that was all.
I stood alone and dreamed of her no more.

Yet she was all on earth to me.
What was I to her? I could not tell;
Only the morrow could answer true.
But softly, like the distant sounding sea
Or gentle murmur of a faintly tolling bell,
I heard her whisper "I love you."

EVENING.

This is the long cold chill of the twilight with stinging
of snowflakes ;
Fitful and few they drift, and quiver and hang on the
stubble.
Brown are the plains, bare-touched with a lifeless green ;
and the hoar-frost
Snaps on the grass underfoot. Here the stumps of the
pine trees are standing
Tenantless save for the snake that coils his green length
in his sleeping.
Back of them, shadowed with forest, the hills toss the
wind gust, and vanishing
Wraiths of sunsets forgotten enhalo the hills with a
crimsoned
Glory. Behind the wood the clouds show thin edges
illuminated,
Building a burning Valhalla, with toppling spires, in
the heavens,
Till they are blown away, and the vision is gone with
the north wind,
Only the hard, chill, light of a little moon tints the snow-
flakes.

ELEGY.

I saw a barren shore-line, purged of life,
Unblessed with greenness, and its slopes were strewn
With broken shells.

The sea was yellowed with a dying sun,
And matted, pale-hued plants enfouled its stream,
That ages long had known not of the gleam
Of flashing fire, but ever sear and dun
It changeless lay.

A little wind was restless as it blew
Unfreighted, chill and scentless, as if borne
O'er noiseless and soundless hills, forlorn
Of life, forsaken seas that never knew
The suck of wave.

The sand was ever one unending tint,
All full of little hollows, filling slow
And tiny wind-cut hillocks, wearing low.
The sky was brazen color, lacking glint
Of light on brass.

I saw a barren shore line, void of life,
And nought remained of living, nor of men
Save broken shells.

CAST.

A broken soul came softly through the night;
A piteous broken soul that loved the night;
A soul that felt no shame.

I saw her great wan eyes that looked ahead
And turned not, yet they held no fear;
Lusterless they were, their word was drear;
Soulless were they not, they were not dead;
Nor held they shame.

I felt her quivering breath blow close on mine;
I felt it tremble as it came and went,
As if heart-beat and mortal fear were blent;
But 'twas too warm for fear; it held no sign
Of aught but life.

The night betrayed her face and in the gloom
I saw her pained sweet mouth that breathed of woe;
Yet not a single tear-drop hung below
Her eyelid. All that told me of the doom
But naught of shame.

A broken soul came softly through the night;
A soul that loved the giver of its load;
A soul that felt no shame.

CROWNED.

Oh perfumed waves of rose-lit brown
With laurel dressed,
I kiss a shining, wind loosed strand—
Oh hair! sun blessed.

I kiss the lock that's blown adown
On shoulders bare.
You need no robe, love, when you stand
Crowned with your hair.

PASSING.

A naked man ran down the yielding sands
And where his foot-prints were stood little pools
Of oozing water, burnished in the sun.
His full-flushed, quivering breasts surged deep with life,
His limbs had symmetry of all desire,
A breath of unborn summers swept his cheek,
And white his shoulders were as wind-cut foam.

So, laughing in the glory of the sun
A naked man ran down the yielding sands.

A naked man ran down the yielding sands
And where his footprints were stood little pools
Of oozing water, black with blackish slime.
His withered hands were chill and colorless,
All bloodless were his breasts and sunless face
That told of dolorous music that ceased not.
From out his eyes his light of life was gone.

With snow-flakes gleaming on his blue, dead lips
A naked man ran down the yielding sands.

PASTURE LANDS.

I love to wander on the pasture land
Of mornings when the armor of the frost
Stiffens the close-cropped grass until it snaps
And crackles underfoot; and see the leaves
Of mullin plants, still green, and homely weeds
That grow in plenty where the cattle live.
I kneel beside the little open spring
All full of straws and floating greenish plants,
Push them away, and with distended lips,
Drink of the stinging water. Then I rise
And wander back again. Perhaps my foot
All unawares may hit the grayish hood
Of some belated puff-ball, and may send
Its smoky cloud to cold and sterile sleep.
Perchance I see a withered toad-stool lie,
Its pink-flushed gills frost blasted in the grass,
Poor broken being of the field.

SIN.

“And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
Is the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin.”

—Browning.

Sin? So sin it be, if sin be what
Ye who succeed pronounce on us who fail.
Sin? Methinks if I were one of ye
Whose lamps are lit and full of scented oil
That I would not be ready to condemn
Those soul cursed ones whose wicks are burned all dry.
Yet are we soul cursed? Quick ye are to judge
All unawitting that our unlit dreams
Are sweet to us, as are your lighted ways.
We bathe in opals under shining sea
And float in lily dew. And ye who prate
Of sin and ungirt loins, and useless lamps,
Who dream not, have no visions but desire
Of fleshly things, I wonder, fain,
If we may not impute the sin to you.

GHOST OF AN ANTHEM.

In the ghost fraught gleam of an autumn moon
I wandered alone where no shadows are,
And a stricken wind sang a trembling croon
To its loveless lover, the crimson star.
I wandered alone where no shadows are
Where the south wind's wailing piteous croon
To the distant, ensanguined, motionless star
Was the ghost of the anthem it sang in June.

I wandered alone where no shadows are
To the Druid stone, with its magic rune—
The wraith of a gleeman came from afar
And chanted the ghost of a sea-king's tune.
He sang his song in a dream fraught croon
The song of the swords that bite and that mar,
'Twas the dream of the soul of a viking tune,
The ghost of an anthem he sang from afar.

On the sacrifice stone, with the graven rune
I watched alone with the lifeless star,
As the frightened wind wailed its lover's croon
To the crimson light that it loved from afar.
What knew the wind that the blazing star
Was the ghost of a world that haunted the moon?
What knew the skald that he sang from afar
The ghost of the anthem he chanted in June.

OUR YESTERDAYS.

See Macbeth's Speech to Seyton. Act. V., Sec. 5.

'Tis not the road I came! Yet it must be.
There are my footprints with their cross-mark. Seemed
A vaster place. What little way it is!
Those scarp-hung cliffs that were rough-broke and
streamed

Are only little stones with pale red lines
Like some well-doubted, bastard birth-marks, cut
By ancient rain. Where is the river ledge
Whose red stream rolled unnamed things, way-warped,
but

I 'held dark, tumbled trunks of men? Is that
The place? Those stunted rushes choked across
That foul, pale brook that drops from yon sucked spring
Where the white worms' nest is? At every toss
The wind gives, falls a worm or two—so that's
What makes those writhing bodies in the stream!
Now scan those things that come a-staggering
Like lost, half-footed creatures in a dream
That know not sound nor time. They stand in awe
And waver, foot to foot. Fain they would appear
Like runts unfed, man-yeanelings without dams,
Unworthy of the glue pit, fend the shear!
E'en my flat footpoints hold their eyes! The damp
That hangs in the dead soil makes of them pools
To gaze in—What, words carved in this black rock?
Here—"All our yesterdays have lighted fools."

A LANTHORNE CHANT.

Sea colored shell art thou
Breathing of waters
Shell soft and metal wrought
By sun-bursting flame.
Sea, sun and earth-depths come
Fashioned together
Lanthorne that bringeth here
Love, light and song.

Runes under Lanthorne light,
Graven in stone.
Runes carved by masters
Who sang as they carved;
Sunk in unbroken stone,
Changeless, enduring,
Speak the three master-words,
Love, light and song.

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